

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6965

NASA HEADQUARTERS WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0309

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TSPA, NASA, MA

SUBJECT: NASA STATION COMMUNICATIONS

LIMDIS

NAIROBI FOR REDSO

REFS: TANANARIVE 0301 AND 0302 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: WE NOW WORKING THROUGH MILITARY DIRECTORY CHAIRMAN ANDRIAMHAZO TO TRY OBTAIN RESTORATION NASA STATION COMMUNICATIONS. BUT CLEAR THAT CONSERVATIVE-RADICAL SPLIT WHICH WE HAD FORESEEN IN MILITARY DIRECTORY ALREADY DEVELOPING, BECAUSE RATSIRAKA INSISTENT THAT RESUMPTION OF STATION OPERATIONS BE CONDITIONED ON PAYMENT BACK RENT, AND ASSERTS LAST YEAR'S AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WITH ANDRIAMHAZO ON RENTAL ISSUE NOT VALID. SINCE THIS SPLIT LIKELY ACCENTUATE TOWARD SHOWDOWN, OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON FUTURE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT CONSERVATIVE SIDE HAVE QUICKLY BECOME EVEN MORE URGENT. END SUMMARY.

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1. WE ARE NOW WORKING THROUGH GENERAL ANDRIAMHAZO,

CHAIRMAN, MILITARY DIRECTOR, FOR RESTORATION OF NASA COMMUNICATIONS. AS CAN BE SEEN BELOW, CONSERVATIVE-RADICAL CONFLICT BETWEEN ANDRIAMAHAZO AND RATSIRAKA (WHICH WE FORESAW IN TANANARIVE 0301) PROBABLY PRECIPITATED BY THIS ISSUE, AND IT MAY THEREFORE TAKE A LITTLE TIME FOR IT TO BE WORKED OUT. DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN AS FOLLOWS:

2. AFTERNOON FEB 19 FONOFF DIRECTOR BILATERAL RELATIONS RATSIMANDRESY GAVE ME AFFIRMATIVE DECISION ON NASA COMMUNICATIONS, BUT SAID HE HAD HAD TOUGH TIME CONVINCING RELUCTANT MILITARY DIRECTORY. I ASKED TO WHOM HE HAD TALKED. HE REPLIED THAT, IN ADDITION TO FOREIGN MINISTER ZAKARIASY, HE HAD RAISED MATTER WITH COMMANDER RATSIRAKA AND LT. COLONEL RAKOTOMALALA ON MILITARY DIRECTORY. I GATHERED IT WAS LATTER TWO WHO TOOK DECISION TO RESTORE NASA COMMUNICATIONS, RATHER THAN ENTIRE DIRECTORY.

3. ACCORDING RATSIMANDRESY, MILITARY DIRECTORY (FOR WHICH READ RATSIRAKA), IN COURSE DISCUSSION OF NASA COMMUNICATIONS, BROUGHT UP QUESTION OF RENTAL PAYMENTS FOR PAST YEARS BY NASA STATION WHICH RATSIRAKA HAD RAISED DURING 1973 VISIT TO WASHINGTON, AND NOTED THAT NO SUCH PAYMENTS YET MADE. I REPLIED THAT RENTAL QUESTION HAD BEEN SETTLED IN PRINCIPLE WITH RAMANANTSOA GOVERNMENT, AND THAT GENERAL ANDRIAMAHAZO, CHAIRMAN OF DIRECTORY, IS FULLY CONVERSANT WITH IT.

4. MORNING FEB 20 RATSIMANDRESY INFORMED ME (WITH DISGUST) THAT RATSIRAKA HAD CHANGED MIND, AND WOULD RESTORE NASA COMMUNICATIONS ONLY IF U.S. GOVERNMENT GAVE ASSURANCE OF PAYMENT OF BACK RENT FOR STATION AS "PROVIDED BY AGREEMENT AND DISCUSSED DURING WASHINGTON VISIT." RATSIRAKA CLAIMED OUR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WITH ANDRIAMAHAZO ON RENT QUESTION NOT VALID BECAUSE IT WAS NOT SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. RATSIMANDRESY NOTED THAT RATSIRAKA HAS TAKEN CHARGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WITHIN MILITARY DIRECTORY. LATER IN DAY WE RECEIVED FONOFF NOTE POLITELY PHRASED, BUT CONFIRMING CONDITION FOR RESUMPTION OF STATION OPERATIONS.
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5. MEANWHILE I TRIED REACH ANDRIAMAHAZO BY TELEPHONE, BUT HE WAS TIED UP IN MEETING. SO I PREPARED PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL LETTER WHICH WAS DELIVERED AFTERNOON FEB 20 TO ANDRIAMAHAZO'S AIDE-DE-CAMP BY DCM. AFTER REVIEWING ABOVE DEVELOPMENTS IN LETTER, I RENEWED EMBASSY'S OFFER (MADE IN EARLIER LETTER) COOPERATE IN ALL WAYS POSSIBLE WITH MILITARY DIRECTORY AND WITH ANDRIAMAHAZO AS

ITS CHAIRMAN. I NOTED THAT WE HAD ALREADY TOLD HIM FEW WEEKS AGO THAT, IN VIEW OF OUR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON NASA STATION, U.S. HAS BEEN READY SIGN AID \$3 MILLION RAILROAD LOAN AGREEMENT. I ADDED EMBASSY READY RECOMMEND EXPORT-IMPORT BANK CREDIT TO WASHINGTON AS SOON AS WE RECEIVE MILITARY DIRECTORY'S FORMAL REQUEST. BUT I STATED I CONVINCED WASHINGTON WOULD NOT FIND IT POSSIBLE RE-CONSIDER AGREEMENT ALREADY REACHED IN PRINCIPLE ON RENT FOR NASA STATION.

6. I THEN ASKED HIM AUTHORIZE RESTORATION OF NASA STATION COMMUNICATIONS, AND REASSURE US THAT HIS AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO CONTINUED OPERATION OF STATION, INCLUDING \$100,000 RENT PER YEAR STARTING IN 1973, REMAINS VALID.

7. COMMENT: CONFRONTATION BETWEEN CONSERVATIVES UNDER ANDRIAMAHAZO AND RADICALS UNDER RATSIRAKA DEVELOPING JUST AS WE HAVE FORESEEN IT. THIS DEVELOPMENT, WHICH WILL ACCENTUATE, MAKES EVEN MORE URGENT AFFIRMATIVE DEPT RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN TA ANARIVE 0302 ON FUTURE ASSISTANCE. AS WE INDICATED IN THAT MESSAGE, FUTURE OF NASA STATION WILL BE SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZED IF RATSIRAKA EMERGES VICTORIOUS.
MENDENHALL

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